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Snowmobiling in Illinois: State Trails and Regulations

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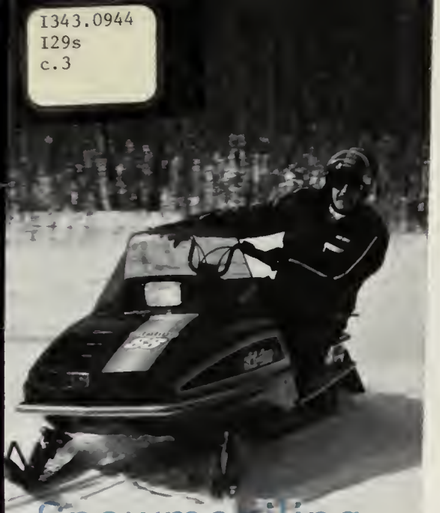

Snowmobiling in Illinois: State Trails and Regulations

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Snowmobiling rapidly is becoming a favorite winter-time sport among Illinoisans. Responding to the increased interest in snowmobiling, the Department of Conservation has opened a variety of areas at selected state sites for the benefit of the snowmobiling public.

Designated trails and areas are providing new, exciting and picturesque winter experiences for snowmobile enthusiasts at 21 state-managed sites throughout the northern two-thirds of Illinois. Public snowmobiling areas now are within convenient driving distance of nearly everyone interested in this form of winter recreation.

In order to keep these areas open and available to the public, snowmobilers must conduct themselves in an ethical manner and obey regulations while enjoying these specialized facilities. Misuse of the resource can soon jeopardize continued use of these areas for snowmobiling. The following rules apply to all areas and facilities managed by the Conservation Department on which snowmobiling is permitted:

1. Snowmobilers are required to register their presence at the Park Office or other designated registration point before snowmobiling at a state site.

2. Minimum snow cover of four inches is required before a state site will be opened to snowmobilers. Snowmobilers should call ahead to check snow conditions and site openings.

3. Winter camping is available at most state sites, but it is advisable to call ahead to check on the level of camping services available during winter.

4. Groups of 25 persons or more will not be admitted to any state site unless permission is secured from the site manager in advance. Groups of minors must have adequate supervision with at least one responsible adult accompanying each group of 15 minors.

5. Snowmobiles may be operated only on designated trails, designated areas or designated frozen surface waters at any site managed by the Conservation Department.

6. Snowmobiles may not be used to hunt or harass any birds or animals.

Snowmobile Registration & Safety Act

Article 1. Definitions

601-2.01 Cowling—"Cowling" means the forward portions of a snowmobile surrounding the clutch and motor assembly.

601-2.05 Highway—"Highway" means the entire width between boundary lines of any highway, road, street, avenue, alley, or public driveway.

601-2.09 Operate—"Operate" means to ride in or on, other than as a passenger, use or control the operations of a snowmobile in any manner, whether or not the snowmobile is under way.

601-2.14 Roadway—"Roadway" means that portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel, exclusive of the berm or shoulder.

601-2.15 Snowmobile—"Snowmobile" means a self-propelled device designed for travel on snow or ice or natural terrain, steered by skis or runners, and supported in part by skis, belts, or cleats.

Article 2. Inspections—

602-2 Agents of the Department of Conservation or other duly authorized police officers may stop and inspect any snowmobile at any time for the purpose of determining if the provisions of this Act are being complied with.

602-4 Resistance to Officers. It is unlawful for any person to resist or obstruct any officer or employee of the Department in the discharge of his duties under this Act.

Article. 3.

603-1 Operation of Unnumbered Snowmobiles. Except as hereinafter provided, no person shall, after the effective date of this Act, operate any snowmobile within this State unless such snowmobile has been registered and numbered in accordance with the provisions of this Article, and unless the certificate of number awarded to such snowmobile is in full force and effect.

603-2 Identification Number Application. The owner of each snowmobile requiring numbering by this State shall file an application for number with the Department on forms approved by it. The application shall be signed by the owner of the snowmobile and shall be accompanied by a fee of $8.

603-3 Identification Number Display. The Department shall issue to the snowmobile owner two registration expiration decals with the number awarded to that snowmobile imprinted upon the decals. The owner shall apply these decals on each side of the cowling of such snowmobile. The certificate of number shall be pocket size and shall be available at all times for inspection on the snowmobile for which issued, whenever such snowmobile is in operation.

603-5 Transfer of Identification Number. The purchaser of a snowmobile that already bears an Illinois registration number shall, within 15 days after acquiring same, make application to the Department for the transfer to him of the certificate of number issued to such snowmobile, giving his name, his address and the number of such snowmobile. The fee is $2 for the transfer of any unexpired time on a certificate but, when less than six months remains to the expiration date, the purchaser shall apply for a transfer-renewal for a fee of $8 for approximately two years. All transfers will bear September 30 expiration dates in the calendar year of expiration.

An application for transfer accompanied by an $8 fee will be treated as an application for a transfer-renewal for 2 years from the nearest September 30. Upon receipt of the application and fee, the Department shall transfer the certificate of number issued to such snowmobile to the new owner. Unless such application is made and fee paid within 30 days, such snowmobile shall be deemed to be without certificate of number and it shall be unlawful for any person to operate such snowmobile until the certificate is issued.

603-11 Exception from Number Provisions of this Act. A snowmobile shall not be required to be numbered under this Act if it is:

A. Owned and used by the United States, another state, or a political subdivision thereof, but such snowmobiles shall display the name of the owner on the cowling thereof.

B. Covered by a valid registration or license of another state, province or country *which is the domicile of the owner of the snowmobile* and is not operated within this State on more than 30 consecutive days in any calendar year.

C. Owned and operated on lands owned by the owner or operator or on lands to which he has a contractual right other than as a member of a club or association, provided the snowmobile is not operated elsewhere within the state.

Article 4. Snowmobile Equipment

604-1 Equipment. All snowmobiles operating within the State of Illinois shall be equipped with:

A. At least one white head-lamp having a minimum candlepower of sufficient intensity to exhibit a white light plainly visible from a distance of at least 500 feet ahead during hours of darkness under normal atmospheric conditions.

B. At least one red tail lamp having a minimum candlepower of sufficient intensity to exhibit a red light plainly visible from a distance of five hundred feet to the rear during hours of darkness under normal atmospheric conditions.

C. A brake system in good mechanical condition.

D. Reflective material of a minimum area of 16 square inches mounted on each side of the cowling. Identifying numbers may be included in computing the required 16 square inch area.

E. Adequate sound suppression equipment. No snowmobile manufactured after June 1, 1972, shall be sold or offered for sale, unless it is equipped with sound suppression devices that limit total machine noise in accordance with noise pollution standards established pursuant to the Environmental Protection Act.[1]

[1] Chapter 111½, 1001 et seq.

Article 5. Control Provisions—

605-1 Operation Generally. It is unlawful for any person to drive or operate any snowmobile in the following ways:

A. At a rate of speed too fast for conditions and the fact that the speed of the snowmobile does not exceed the applicable maximum speed limit allowed does not relieve the driver from the duty to decrease speed as may be necessary to avoid colliding with any person or vehicle or object within legal requirements and the duty of all persons to use due care.

B. In a careless, reckless or negligent manner.

C. While under the influence of intoxicating beverages or narcotic or dangerous drugs.

D. At any time without at least one lighted headlamp and one lighted tail lamp on the snowmobile.

E. Within five hundred yards of any nature preserve.

F. On the tracks or right of way of an operating railroad.

605-2 Operation on Highways. It is unlawful for any person to drive or operate any snowmobile on a highway in this State except as follows:

A. On highways other than tollways, interstate highways and limited-access highways snowmobiles may make a direct crossing provided:
   (1) The crossing is made at an angle of approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the highway and at a place where no obstruction prevents a quick and safe crossing; and
   (2) The snowmobile is brought to a complete stop before crossing a highway; and
   (3) The operator yields the right of way to all oncoming traffic which constitutes a hazard.

B. On highways other than State highways, tollways, interstate highways and limited-access highways snowmobiles may be operated not less than 10 feet from the roadway and in the same direction as traffic. On such highways, the corporate authorities of a city, village or incorporated town may adopt ordinances providing for variance from the 10 foot separation requirement of this subsection within city, village or town limits. Corporate authorities of a city, village or incorporated town may adopt ordinances providing for trails and regulating snowmobile operation within city, village or town limits.

C. On highways other than State highways, tollways, interstate highways and limited-access highways snowmobiles may be operated on roadways when it is necessary to cross a bridge or culvert or when it is impracticable to gain immediate access to an area adjacent to a highway where a snowmobile is to be operated.

D. Corporate authorities of a city, village or incorporated town may by ordinance designate one or more specific public highways or streets within their jurisdiction as egress and ingress routes for the use of snowmobiles. In the event

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that such public highways or streets are under the jurisdiction of the State of Illinois, expressed written consent of the Illinois Department of Transportation shall be required. Corporate authorities acting under the authority of this paragraph D shall erect and maintain signs giving proper notice thereof.

E. Snowmobiles may be lawfully driven or operated upon those highways where posted by the township road commissioner in townships with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants. For purposes of this paragraph E, "highways" are defined as township roads pursuant to Section 2-205 of the Illinois Highway Code.

605-3 Youthful Operators. It is unlawful for any person without a valid motor vehicle driver's license to operate a snowmobile on a highway as provided in Section 5-2. No person under 10 years of age may operate a snowmobile. Persons at least 10 and less than 12 years of age may operate a snowmobile only if they are either accompanied on the snowmobile by a parent or guardian or a person at least 18 years of age designated by a parent or guardian. Persons at least 12 and less than 16 years of age may operate a snowmobile only if they are either accompanied on the snowmobile by a parent or guardian or a person at least 16 years of age designated by a parent or guardian, or such operator is in possession of a certificate issued by the Department authorizing the holder to operate snowmobiles. Violations of this Section done with the knowledge of a parent or guardian shall be deemed a violation by the parent or guardian and punishable under Article X of this Act.

Article 6. Accident Reports—

606-1 Collisions, accidents, and casualties; reports.

A. The operator of a snowmobile involved in a collision, accident, or other casualty, shall render to other persons affected by this collision, accident, or other casualty such assistance as may be practicable and as may be necessary in order to save them from or minimize any danger caused by the collision, accident, or other casualty, and also shall give his name, address, and identification of his snowmobile to any person injured and to the owner of any property damaged in the collision, accident, or other casualty.

B. In the case of collision, accident, or other casualty involving a snowmobile, the operator thereof, if the collision, accident, or other casualty results in death or injury to a person or damage to property in excess of $100, shall file with the Department a full description of the collision, accident, or other casualty, including such information as the Department may, by regulation, require. Reports of such accidents must be filed with the Department on a Department Accident Report form within five days.

C. Reports of accidents resulting in personal injury wherein a person is incapacitated for a period exceeding 72 hours, must be filed with the Department on a Department Accident Report form within five days. Accidents which result in loss of life shall be reported to the Department on a Department form within 48 hours.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION SNOWMOBILE SITES

Specific weather conditions must exist before any state trail can be opened for snowmobiling. Several facilities offer other winter activities such as cross-country skiing, ice fishing, ice skating and sledding. An advance call to the site is recommended.

1. Argyle Lake State Park: Designated trails and unplowed roads totaling seven and one-half miles are available for snowmobiling from sunrise to 10 p.m. Parking facilities, toilets, and picnic shelters are available at the site. The trails wind through scenic oak-hickory timber and pine plantations which cover rolling terrain and steep hillsides. The park is located two miles north of Colchester in McDonough County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 2, Colchester, IL 62326; phone (309) 776-3422.

2. Big River State Forest: Approximately 40 miles of groomed snowmobile trails, utilizing existing fire lanes, wind through scenic pine forest lands. Trails are open from sunrise to midnight. Parking areas, toilets, and a warming house are available at the trail head. Forest Headquarters are located six miles north of Oquawka in Henderson County. For information, contact the Forest Headquarters, R.R. 1, Keithsburg, IL 61442; phone (309) 374-2496.

3. Chain O'Lakes State Park: Access at the park is provided only to the frozen lake surfaces of the Fox Chain O'Lakes. Lake access points are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Always call ahead for ice conditions. The gently rolling glacial landscape of the park, which borders three of the lakes, is covered with sparse to dense timber. Parking areas, toilets, and picnicing facilities are available. The park is located in McHenry and Lake counties, a few miles west of Antioch. For information, contact the Park Office, 729 E. State Park Road, Spring Grove, IL 60081; phone (312) 587-5512.

4. Clinton Lake State Recreation Area: Snowmobiling is allowed 24 hours a day on 5,000 acres of frozen lake surface. An advance call to check on ice conditions is advised. The lake, consisting of two elongated arms, is bordered by scenic hillsides, covered with dense woods. Snowmobile access is provided at four boat launching ramps. Parking areas, toilets and picnic facilities are available. The area is located about six miles east of Clinton in DeWitt County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 1, DeWitt, IL 61735; phone (217) 935-8722.

5. Hennepin Canal Parkwey: The Canal towpath running from Bridge 39 to Lock 3 near Bureau Junction, and along the feeder canal from Sheffield to Rock Falls comprises 75.8 miles of signed, scenic snowmobile trail. Registration, office parking, toilets and a warming house are located at the parkway visitor center just east of Sheffield. Other registration points and parking are located at Lock 24 near Geneseo, Lock 23 near Atkinson, Lock 11 near Tiskilwa, IL 92 Bridge 56 near Tampico, IL 88 Bridge 45 south of Rock Falls and Bridge 15 near Sheffield. Numerous historical aqueducts and working canal locks can be viewed along the tree and shrub lined canal. For a map on the Canal Parkway, contact the Parkway Office, R.R. #2, Sheffield, IL 61361; phone (815) 454-2328.

6. Illinois-Michigan Canal State Trail: Snowmobilers may use 44 miles of groomed trails following the canal towpath which is open 24 hours a day. Access points with parking, warming shelters, toilets and picnicking facilities, are located at Buffalo Rock, Gebhard Woods, and Channahon State Parks. Access may also be achieved in the communities of LaSalle, Utica, Ottawa and Marseilles. Historic stone aqueducts, canal locks and other historic canal structures, as well as picturesque woods and panoramic views of the Illinois River are located along the canal. For a map of the canal and more information, contact the State Trail Office, P.O. Box 272, Morris, IL 60450; phone (815) 942-0796.

7. Iroquois County Conservation Area: Snowmobilers are permitted to use 11 miles of signed trails that follow around the perimeter of the area. The site contains numerous sand ridges dominated by black oak forest. The lower lying areas range from dry prairie to marsh land. Hours open are from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The area is located 5 miles northeast of Beaverville in Iroquois County. For information, contact the Area Office, Beaverville, IL 60912; phone (815) 435-2218.

8. Johnson Sauk Trail State Park: Snowmobilers may use 10 miles of designated trails and unplowed park roads from sunrise to sunset after the completion of upland game hunting season. The scenic, looped trail system winds through stands of oak-hickory timber, pine plantations and gently rolling meadows. Parking and toilets are available at the site, which is located five miles north of Kewanee in Henry County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 3, Kewanee, IL 61433; phone (309) 853-5589.

9. Jubilee College State Park: a 14-mile trail is available for snowmobiling from 8 a.m. to sunset. The trail winds through scenic woods and meadows over rolling terrain. Parking, toilets and a picnic shelter are available at the trail head. The park is located in Peoria County near Kickapoo, about 15 miles northwest of Peoria. For more information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 2, Box 72, Brimfield, IL 61517; phone (309) 243-7683.

10. Kankakee River State Park: Designated snowmobile trails pass through 12 miles of this large forested park which borders the Kankakee River, offering the snowmobiler some beautiful winter scenery. Snowmobiling is allowed from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Parking and toilets are available. The park is located in Kankakee and Will Counties, six miles northwest of Kankakee. For more information, contact the Park Office, P.O. Box 37, Bourbonnais, IL 60194; phone (815) 933-1383.

11. Middle Fork Fish and Wildlife Area: Ten to 12 miles of trail will be open for snowmobiling through rolling terrain and scenic woodlands. The area is located approximately 12 miles northwest of Danville. For more information and times of operation contact Kickapoo State Park, R.R. 1, Oakwood, IL 61858; phone (217) 442-4915.

12. Mississippi Palisades State Park: Five miles of groomed trails and 100 acres of open field are available for snowmobiling from 8 a.m. to sunset. Trails feature the unglaciated landscape of the park which overlooks the Mississippi River and contains massive limestone bluffs bisected by steep wooded ravines, forested uplands and some hillside prairie. Parking areas, toilets, picnicking facilities, and an on-site concession are available to snowmobilers. The park is located just north of Savanna in Carroll County. Information is available by contacting the Park Office, 4577 Ill. 84 North, Savanna, IL 61074; phone (815) 273-2731.

13. Moraine View State Park: Snowmobiling is permitted on 10 miles of designated trails which can be used from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The looped trail system is situated in oak-hickory timber stands and gently rolling meadows. Parking, toilets, and warming shelter are available at the trail head. The park is located seven miles north of LeRoy in McLean County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 2, LeRoy, IL 61752; phone (309) 724-8032.

14. Ramsey Lake State Park: Snowmobiling is permitted from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on eight miles of unplowed park roads. The trail crosses the scenic 1,900-acre park, which is characterized by rolling terrain with steep hillsides covered by dense timber surrounding a 47-acre lake. The park is located about one mile northwest of Ramsey in Fayette County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 1, Ramsey, IL 62080; phone (618) 423-2215.

15. Rock Cut State Park: Snowmobiling is permitted on 10 miles of trail through rolling terrain from 8 a.m. to sunset. The park, located six miles northeast of Rockford in Winnebago County, features scenic woodlands. Snowmobilers should use the Hart Road to gain access to the trail head. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 1, Box A-49, Caledonia, IL 61011; phone (815) 885-3311.

16. Sand Ridge State Forest: 35 miles of snowmobile trails, utilizing existing fire lanes, are available 24 hours a day. The scenic trails are situated in mature stands of native "sand oak" timber and vast pine plantations. Parking and toilet facilities are available. The forest is located five miles west of Manito in Mason County. For information, contact the Forest Headquarters, P.O. Box 111, Forest City, IL 61532; phone (309) 597-2212.

17. Shabbona Lake Recreation Area: Snowmobiling is permitted from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on seven miles of designated trails. Parking, toilets and picnic facilities are available at the site. The park, located just south of Shabbona in DeKalb County, is characterized by rolling terrain with meadows and some upland and bottomland timber. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 1, Box 121, Shabbona, IL 60550; (815) 824-2106.

18. Sangchris Lake State Park: Snowmobilers may use 11 miles of designated trail from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The looped trail winds through reforested fields over relatively flat terrain. Parking and toilets are available at the trail head. The park is located about 15 miles southeast of Springfield, near Rochester in Sangamon County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 1, Rochester, IL 62563; phone (217) 498-9208.

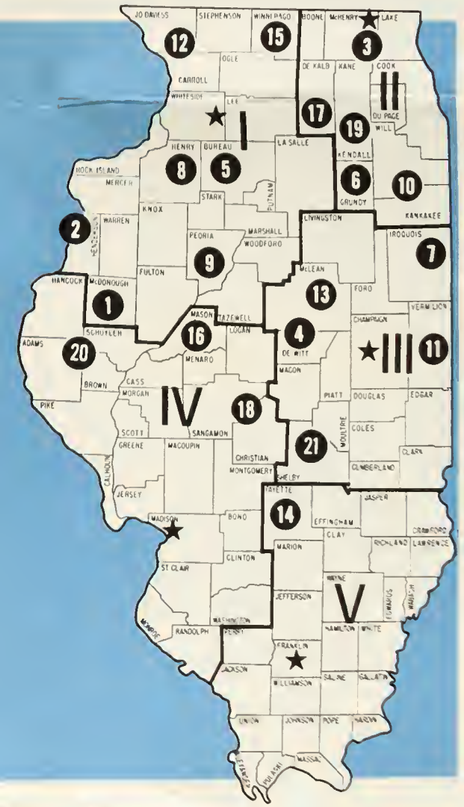
19. Silver Springs State Park: Approximately three and one-half miles of designated trails are available for snowmobiling from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The trails run through the mature timber on relatively flat terrain that typifies the park. Parking, toilets, a warming house and picnic shelters are available. The park is located five miles west of Yorkville in Kendall County. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 1, Box 318, Yorkville, IL 60560; phone (312) 553-6297.

20. Weinberg-King State Park: Snowmobilers may use 18 miles of snowmobile trails running over designated equestrian trails from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The park, located about three miles east of Augusta in Schuyler County, contains scenic woods and old pasture land with rolling terrain and steep hillsides. Parking and toilets are available near the trails. For information, contact the Park Office, P.O. Box 203, Augusta, IL 62311; phone (217) 392-2345.

21. Wolf Creek State Park: Snowmobiling is allowed on the park's winding, 15-mile equestrian trail from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. The trail offers rolling terrain, dense woods and open meadows. Parking, toilets and picnic facilities are available at the site. The park is located eight miles northwest of Windsor in Shelby County, on the eastern shore of Lake Shelbyville. For information, contact the Park Office, R.R. 2, Windsor, IL 61957; phone (217) 459-2831.

— PREPARE —

Snowmobile safety education is a positive move toward a safe and enjoyable snowmobile future. Enroll in a Snowmobile Safety Course now. For information on class locations, call (217) 782-6431, or contact your nearest Regional Office.



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